

## Lead Screening: Well-Child Health Care Fact Sheet

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### What is lead screening?

Lead screening is performed by measuring the level of lead in the blood. Lead is a toxin that is particularly dangerous for young children because of their small size and rapid growth and development. It can cause behavioral and learning difficulties, anemia, seizures and other medical problems.

Children can be exposed to lead through:

- The home or child care environment:
  - buildings built before 1978 with peeling paint or recent or planned renovation
  - located near a highway or lead-related industrial facility
  - lead-contaminated soil
- Family members who works with lead in their occupation or hobbies
- Imported ceramic pottery used for cooking, storing, or serving food
- Home remedies that contain lead
- Toys and other manufactured goods containing lead

### How is lead screening done?

A lead poisoning **risk-assessment** involves:

- Asking the family a series of questions about the child's possible exposure to lead

Blood Lead **screening** involves:

- A blood lead test, with blood taken from a finger- stick or vein, obtained and interpreted by a health professional

### What might I observe?

Most children with lead poisoning show no symptoms. If there are signs or symptoms present, you might notice:

- Irritability, headache
- Poor appetite, stomachache
- Pale skin, tiredness
- Slow growth and development
- A child who eats paint chips or dirt

### Follow-up to lead screening

If screening indicates a lead level at or above 10 ug/dl, the child should be referred to a health professional for evaluation and treatment. In addition, if the blood lead level is higher than a previous test's level, even if it remains below 10 ug/dl, the child's health care professional should be consulted for a determination of the need for further evaluation and treatment. For this reason, it is preferable for the child's health care provider to obtain and

interpret the results of blood lead tests, rather than having the tests performed by another system. **If for some reason the blood lead test is obtained by someone other than the child's health care provider, the results of the lead test must be communicated back to the health care provider for interpretation and a determination of the need for further follow up and treatment.**

Follow up and treatment may include:

- Identifying and removing the source of lead, or removing the child from the source of lead exposure
- Nutritional counseling, iron/vitamin supplements
- Referral for developmental testing and ongoing developmental evaluation and services as needed
- Follow-up testing of the child's blood lead level and other blood tests
- Testing of siblings/other children in the household for elevated blood lead levels
- Medication to remove lead from the blood

***Lead poisoning can cause serious health and developmental problems in young children. Early identification of the child at risk is key to removing the child from the source of lead exposure and assuring appropriate follow up and treatment for the child with the goal of improving health and developmental outcomes.***